



Running Rabid

Balancing the passion to pursue with the pressure to produce.

The Power of Accountability

...discipline yourself for the purpose of Godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB)

Not long after Tanya and I moved to Houston we got very involved in a young marrieds class at Cypress Bible Church. It was a wonderful, carefree time in our lives where we were able to build strong relationships with other Believers. From my perspective it helped set a foundation for us as a family and equally important for me as a man to have accountability in my life. The story I have for you is unfortunately very true and reflects a potentially disastrous situation that can occur when any of us fail to set up protocols for protecting ourselves against the temptations of life.

Tanya and I became very good friends with a couple. To protect the names of this couple let's call them Mike and Susan. We were practically inseparable and spent many weekends together; we even took a trip to the United Kingdom with them in May 1998. Mike and Susan did not have any children and our older daughter, Ashley, was a baby at that time. Along with this couple, we helped start an Adult Bible Church (ABF) that attracted many young couples. It was a vibrant group and had many solid, Biblically-minded Believers. The core members of this group eventually went on to start Harvest Bible Church.

As part of this ABF we started accountability groups for the men and women. Most of the couples in the ABF did not have children, so we were able to spend a lot of time together. Many of us had not been in accountability groups together, so it was a new experience for us. In general, accountability groups are only as good as the men participating in them. If a man chooses to "play games" and is not willing to make changes in his life when they are needed, the process of accountability falls apart. As you might have figured out by now, Mike's level of accountability was less than stellar.

Mike and Susan were a dynamic couple and everyone loved them. They were extremely active and attended every event. Susan was very attractive and a very solid Christian. Mike was usually the life of the party and even led music for our ABF on Sunday morning. One of the guys in our accountability group noticed that Mike was frequently seen downtown having coffee with some of the ladies with whom he worked. In a non-confrontational way we encouraged Mike to be careful and set boundaries to ensure that nothing inappropriate would happen. Mike assured us that nothing was going on and we made the mistake of believing him.

Over the next six months things seemed to be going OK until I received a call from Susan. She said she had become suspicious and decided to look at Mike's cell phone bill. What she found was devastating. Over a 2-month period Mike started having an affair with a woman he met on a business trip. Every time he went to her home town they wound up getting together. One of the other men in our ABF and I decided to go see Mike and find out what was going on. He confessed to the affair and admitted what he was doing was wrong. He said he would break things off and confess to Susan.

For the first time in my life I started to understand the difference between *repentance* and *remorse*. Repentance is when we make bad decisions and decide to turn away from sin through repentance and confession, remorse is when we feel sorry for doing something wrong (or better said, getting caught!) even though we have not real intention of changing the way we are living. Put Biblically, Peter repented and Judas had remorse. **Mike had**

remorse, but no repentance. For the next 6 months or so everything seemed to be as if life had returned back to normal. Susan was devastated, but was the loving wife and willing to forgive.

Not long after this time period Tanya and I left Cypress Bible to help start Harvest Bible. We continued to stay engaged with Mike and Susan, but our relationship with them was severely impacted by Mike's poor decisions. I think many in our group felt betrayed and were devastated by what Susan had gone through. Not long after we left the group we discovered that Mike started having multiple affairs, including one with a married young lady in their ABF. Not only had he destroyed his marriage, he destroyed another marriage. The ultimate "nail in the coffin" was that he and this young lady wound up moving in together after she left her husband. That was in 2001 and I do not think their relationship lasted more than a year.

Today, Mike lives in Tennessee. Susan went on to marry a wonderful Christian man and they have two beautiful sons. I have not spoken to Mike since February 2003 and our parting conversation was not a very good one (I still remember it – I talked to him on the phone from my hotel room in New Orleans at a pipeline conference). In 1998 he was my best friend, five years later I would never talk to him again. I think for many of us who were friends with Mike and Susan we would never be the same again. I will admit it took me a few years to get over the devastation and engage with other Christian men, but within a few years I was back on track. What I learned from Mike is this truth – ***be very careful with unchecked sin your life as a forest fire always starts as only a spark!***

In his book, *Six Battles Every Men Must Win*, Bill Perkins talks about six areas in the life of every man that require our full focus and attention. These areas include the following:

- Battle One: Fight for Your Identity
- Battle Two: Fight for Your Personal Holiness
- Battle Three: Fight for your Family
- Battle Four: Fight Through Pain
- Battle Five: Fight for Your Friends
- Battle Six: Fight for a Strong Faith

If you are looking for a great book to super-charge efforts in your life to establish a pattern of accountability, this one is perfect. It can also be used by a group of men who want to start an accountability group. In his opening chapter, Perkins challenges readers to live as if nothing else matters and that *we must cast aside our passivity and live as the warriors God created us to be*. No truer words were ever spoken!

Questions for the Week

1. Read Galatians 5:16 through 24, which contrasts the deeds of the flesh versus the Fruit of the Spirit.
 - a. List the deeds of the flesh identified in verses 19 through 21.

 - b. List the Fruit of the Spirit in verse 22.

2. According to verse 16, what is the key to not carrying out the desire of the flesh? List some practical ways you can carry this out in your own life.

3. Do you have men in your life to whom you are accountable? If YES, how do you stay engaged with them? If NO, what are your plans to deal with establishing accountability in your life?